

Message Text

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TAGS: SCUL, IN

SUBJECT: NORTON SIMON NATARAJA

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN MAY 31, 1974 NEW YORK TIMES. SHORTER AND LESS DETAILED UPI STORY APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST. QUOTE: A PLANNED EXHIBITION OF ASIAN ART OWNED BY THE NORTON SIMON FOUNDATION, INC., HAS BEEN SUSPENDED AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BECAUSE OF A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FOUNDATION AND METROPOLITAN OFFICIALS.

THE MUSEUM OFFICIALS SAY THEY HAVE TOLD MR. SIMON, THE CALIFORNIA INDUSTRIALIST AND ART COLLECTOR, THAT THE METROPOLITAN WOULD NOT SHOW HIS ASIAN OBJECTS IF THEY INCLUDED THE NATARAJA, THE \$1 MILLION BRONZE SCULPTURE THAT HE BROUGHT IN 1972 AND THAT INDIAN OFFICIALS SAY WAS SMUGGLED OUT OF INDIA.

BUT SPOKESMEN FOR THE FOUNDATION SAY THE MUSEUM NEVER OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED THEM OF ITS DECISION, AND THAT THE REAL ISSUE IS A TWO-YEAR DELAY IN MOUNTING THE EXHIBITION. THE FOUNDATION HAS REMOVED ALL THE ART OBJECTS - ABOUT 50 - THAT IT HAD ON LOAN AT THE MUSEUM, AND IS PREPARING TO FILE A COMPLAINT.

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"WE STILL EXPECT THE SHOW TO GO ON", THOMAS P.F. HOVING,

THE METROPOLITAN'S DIRECTOR, SAID YESTERDAY. "THERE'S POSSIBLY BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING ON MR. SIMON'S PART, AND I THINK THIS CAN BE AMICABLY WORKED OUT."

COMMENT BY LAWYER

MR. SIMON HIMSELF WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT, BUT HELEN BUCKLEY, HIS LAWYER, SAID THAT HE WAS "DISENCHANTED WITH THE ADMINISTRATION AT THE MUSEUM."

"WE ARE PERSONS OF FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL PATIENCE," SHE SAID; "BUT THE SHOW WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE OF INDIA, TWO YEARS AGO. THE MET SEEMS TO BE UNABLE TO PULL IT TOGETHER."

AS FOR THE NATARAJA, SHE SAID, ALTHOUGH METROPOLITAN OFFICIALS HAD NOTIFIED MR. SIMON THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT ASKING THE MUSEUM NOT TO SHOW THE WORK, "THE METROPOLITAN NEVER FLATLY REFUSED TO SHOW IT."

SHE ADDED THAT MR. SIMON AND FOUNDATION PERSONNEL HAD HELD SEVERAL "VERY GENTLE" TALKS WITH INDIAN OFFICIALS ABOUT THE BRONZE, BUT THAT THE INDIANS HAD NEVER MADE AN OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION THAT THE WORK HAD BEEN STOLEN. "WE KNOW THEY WOULD ENJOY HAVING IT IN INDIA, BUT THEY'VE NEVER REALLY DEFINED THE PROBLEM TO US," SHE SAID.

ACCORDING TO MR. HOVING, THE MUSEUM HAD NOTIFIED MR. SIMON AND HIS FOUNDATION OFFICIALS "ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS" OF ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO SHOW THE BRONZE "BECAUSE WE UPHOLD THE UNESCO DRAFT TREATY AINST THE IMPORTATION OF OBJECTS ILLEGALLY ACQUIRED FROM CULTURAL SITES."

HE ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH PERMISSION HAD BEEN OBTAINED FROM THE FOUNDATION TO DELAY THE ASIAN SHOW UNTIL AFTER THE RECENT TAPESTRY EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM, "THEY NEVER GAVE US AN OFFICIAL GO-AHEAD TO MOUNT IT WITHOUT THE NATARAJA."

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"WE ARE STILL PREPARED TO GO AHEAD WITH THE SHOW," MR. HOVING SAID, "ALTHOUGH WE WOULDN'T INCLUDE THE NATARAJA UNLESS WE HEARD FROM THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT THAT IT WOULD BE O.K." ASKED ABOUT THE LEGAL ACTION THE FOUNDATION WAS PREPARING TO FILE, HE SAID, "WE DON'T MIND BEING SUED FOR GOOD WORKS AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR."

BUT ACCORDING TO MISS BUCKLEY THE NATARAJA QUESTION IS MOOT.

"THERE'S NO CHANCE THAT MR. SIMON WOULD ALLOW THEM TO
SHOW IT NOW," SHE SAID. END QUOTE

2. COMMENTS FOLLOWED BY SEPTTEL.

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